

October 2021

National Autism Coordinator Update

Committees, News, and Events



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White House Activities

- The Biden-Harris Administration released a [Fact Sheet](#) in May 2021 to highlight steps taken in the first 100 days of the Administration to support full participation and equality for people with disabilities.
- On July 26, 2021, in celebration of the 31st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Biden-Harris Administration released a [Fact Sheet](#) detailing significant steps undertaken to achieve a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable country for people with disabilities.
- The U.S. AbilityOne Commission administers the [AbilityOne Program](#), one of the largest sources of employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. On [August 13, 2021](#), President Biden appointed the following four disability leaders as Commissioners to lead the AbilityOne Program:
 - Bryan Bashin
 - Christina Brandt
 - Gabriel M. Cazares
 - Chai Rachel Feldblum

Updates from Relevant Federal Committees

Federal Interagency Workgroup on Autism (FIWA)

Managed by the HHS National Autism Coordinator/NIMH/NIH

- This all-federal working group includes multiple federal agencies and departments with programs related to autism and disabilities.
- Departments and agencies on the working group assist with the development of Reports to Congress required under the Autism CARES Act and other cross-agency reports. Most recently worked on the *Report to Congress on the Health and Well-Being of Individuals on the Autism Spectrum* in collaboration with OARC/NIMH, available in late fall 2021 on the IACC webpage.

Federal Partners in Transition (FPT)

Managed by U.S. Department of Labor

- An all-federal workgroup that was formed in 2005 with representatives from several federal departments and agencies, including ED, HHS, DOL, and SSA, to support all youth, including youth with disabilities, in successfully transitioning from school to adulthood.
- Members are continuing to work on developing an updated Federal Youth Transition Plan: A Federal Interagency Strategy and updating the mission/vision statement for FPT.

Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR)

Managed by the Administration for Community Living

- An all-federal committee established under the 1973 Rehabilitation Act to promote coordination and collaboration among federal departments and agencies conducting disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research programs.
- Recent activities include:
 - Publication of [*Disability and Emergency Preparedness: Resources and Research for Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Planning*](#) toolkit.
 - Publication of [*Employment: A Toolkit for Interagency Collaboration*](#), intended to facilitate further research by federal agencies and departments and interagency collaboration in the field of employment for people with disabilities.
 - Webinar entitled [*Building Work-Based Learning Opportunities in the Home, School, and Community*](#) to introduce the concept of work-based learning and the benefits as they apply to students with disabilities.
 - Webinar on [*Employment for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities: Translating Evidence Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic*](#) to examine research, evidence, and strategies for improving education and employment outcomes for youths with disabilities. A summary of the meeting is available [here](#).
 - The Lunch & Learn Webinar Series highlights a variety of topics related to disability and rehabilitation research. Recent Lunch & Learn Webinars have covered workplace disability and inclusion (August 2021) and how national health surveys can be used to better understand HUD-assisted adults living with disabilities (September 2021).

National Council on Disability (NCD)

- Independent federal agency charged with advising the President, Congress, and other federal agencies regarding policies, programs, practices, and procedures that affect people with disabilities.
- [NCD recently responded](#) to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) Request for Information (RFI) on rural emergency hospitals. In the response, NCD highlighted the high usage of emergency room services due to lack of preventative care; the high risk of falls during transportation due to sensory, cognitive, and physical disabilities; lack of needed accommodations such as ASL interpreters during care; and need for additional staff training and accessible equipment.

[RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council \(FCAC\)](#)

Managed by the Administration for Community Living

- The RAISE Family Caregivers Act directs the Secretary of HHS to develop a national family caregiving strategy. The RAISE Act also directed the establishment of the FCAC, a federal advisory committee charged with providing recommendations to the HHS Secretary on effective models of both family caregiving and support to family caregivers, as well as improving coordination across federal government programs. The [Administration for Community Living](#) (ACL) manages this council.
- Recent activities include:
 - On September 22, 2021, the RAISE Act Family Caregiving Advisory Council delivered its [Initial Report to Congress](#). It includes a comprehensive review of the current state of family caregiving and 26 recommendations for how the federal government, states, tribes, territories, and communities—in partnership with the private sector—can better Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage family caregivers.
 - [Full Council](#) meeting held September 2021 included discussion on looking ahead on the development of the National Family Caregiving Strategy.
 - Like the Report to Congress, the Strategy will reflect the diverse needs and preferences of family caregivers and will include actions the nation can take to better-support family caregivers using family centered approaches; assessment and service planning; greater respite options; more options for information, education, and training supports; strengthening financial security and addressing workplace issues; and fostering improvements in service delivery.

[Interdepartmental Serious Mental Illness Coordinating Committee \(ISMICC\)](#)

Managed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

- The ISMICC was established in 2017 by the 21st Century Cures Act. The ISMICC is a federal advisory committee that reports to the Secretary, Congress, and any other relevant federal department or agency on advances in serious mental illness (SMI) and serious emotional disturbance (SED), research related to the prevention, diagnosis, intervention, and treatment and recovery of SMIs, SEDs, and advances in access to services and supports for adults with SMI or children with SED.
- In ISMICC's 2017 Report to Congress, [The Way Forward: Federal Action for a System That Works for All People Living With SMI and SED and Their Families and Caregivers](#), autism is mentioned in the context of serious emotional disturbances (SED) in childhood.

- The ISMICC recently met on August 27, 2021. The Committee discussed significant advances for SMI and SED, as well as hearing a report out on Project AWARE and 988 Crisis Services. The full agenda is available [here](#).
- An upcoming virtual meeting is scheduled for [October 27, 2021, from 1:00 – 5:00 pm](#).

Disability Advisory Committee (DAC)

Managed by the Federal Communications Commission

- The DAC is a federal advisory committee that provides advice and recommendations to the FCC on a wide array of disability issues, including communications and video programming access.
- The DAC recently held a meeting on [September 9, 2021](#).
 - The meeting was attended by White House Office of Public Engagement Associate Director Emily Voorde who emphasized that the Biden Administration is committed to partnering with advancing the priorities of the disability community.
 - The Committee discussed the below recommendations to improve communication access for individuals with disabilities, with the goal to implement these recommendations before the next national emergency.
 - Broadband and consumer digital readiness
 - Exploring the barriers to access and use of internet-connected devices.
 - Incentivizing the development of devices that consider learning differences.
 - Real-time text (RTT): Refresh the availability of RTT on wired line networks and integrating RTT with [Telecom Relay Service \(TRS\)](#).
 - Video conferencing
 - When the meeting organizer fails to provide accommodations with dial-in option, users should be able to access the meeting through TRS.
 - FCC should clarify that TRS users can share text with other users in the same call (e.g., deaf/blind users and people using screen readers).
 - Video programming
 - Ensuring the presence of ASL interpreters.
 - Reviewing technologies that can facilitate Braille display and access to existing captioning streams.
 - TRS waivers: Contingency planning for obtaining waivers and TRS services, including speed-of-answer standards and implementing end date defined by National Emergency Declaration.
 - N-1-1 access

- Ensuring access to N-1-1 services similar to non-disaster times.
- Ensuring access to N-1-1 non-emergency lines using TRS services.

Non-Government Updates:

[International Society for Autism Research \(INSAR\)](#)

- The [2022 annual meeting](#) will be held in Austin, Texas, May 11-14.
 - INSAR 2022 abstract submissions are now open. Deadline to submit is October 20, 2021.
- The INSAR [Cultural Diversity Career Advancement Program](#) is a new initiative whose goal is to increase the amount of autism research from Low/Middle Income Countries and from underrepresented groups in High Income Countries. Mentee and Mentor applications are now being accepted.

[MITRE Neurodiverse Federal Workforce Initiative](#)

MITRE is collaborating with federal, academic, and private industry partners to launch a [Neurodiverse Federal Workforce Initiative](#) to increase high-tech career opportunities within the federal government for individuals on the autism spectrum. With lessons they are learning from this pilot project, MITRE and its federal and private partners hope to change the conversation around workers with disabilities and open the door for more neurodiversity inclusion in the federal government. MITRE will be holding the [Neurodiverse Federal Workforce Summit](#) on October 19-20, 2021 to discuss issues related to this effort. The first day of the summit is open to the public.